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JAPANESE WOOD CUT PRINTS.

ALL students of old Japanese prints or wood engravings, are aware of the fact that it is to the Chinese that the Japanese owe their knowledge of this Art, and that Buddhist books ornamented with wood cuts are their most ancient works, and that engraving is the latest of all Japanese Arts. It was not until the close of the 17th century that Japanese wood cutting was of great importance. (The illustrated books of the 16th century were coarse in execution and Chinese in style). Their first attempts were crude, their coloring poor and paper coarse. Kioto has the honor of being the first center of this Art. From the beginning of the 18th century taste for pictures increased and clever artists commenced to interpret the wishes of these artistic people. Unfortunately the pictures and books illustrated by these early and clever artists are very rare, and he who owns a print of Monorobu's possesses a gem rarely found outside of the old palaces and temples of Japan. Monorobu was a designer of unusual power and imagination and foremost in the brilliant and sudden movement in wood cuts, and one of the first to attempt color prints, which are noted for the accuracy with which he depicted the splendid coiffures of the Japanese women. Experts often decide the date of a print by the style of the hair dressing—for even in those days in far away Japan fashion held tyrannical and changeable sway as it now does in the 19th century. Torii Kiyonobu was prominent in this movement and his prints of actors and posters are extremely rare and considered finer than more recent productions. He also introduced new colors, clothing his figures in checks of black, blue, rose, or vestements decorated with many-hued flowers, handled with such daring and artistic skill as to cause one to wonder and admire. Time has softened the glowing tints, and they now have the harmonious appearance and coloring of old tapestries. It is to Kiyonaga, and others, that great credit must be given for the great advance in Japanese Art, especially in the Ukiyo-ye, (popular school)—a school to which the celebrated Hokusai, born in 1760, was to add luster and fame. Hokusai was both painter and a designer of prints and his personality dominated, to a great extent, Japanese Art of the 19th century. He died 1849, aged 90, and is buried at Yedo. His tomb bears an inscription telling his religious name which interpreted is:—"The glorious and honest chevalier Hokusai." A man of the people, he portrayed modern and every day life, especially street life, consequently was ignored by the aristocratic and court classes, and his admirers were from the ranks of merchants, artisans, etc. Europeans

have eagerly sought his works and lovers of Japanese Art, to-day, are perhaps more familiar with his prints than of any other of his time, they being among the first to cross the ocean, and any collection of note has Hokusai's prints among its numbers. It was only after Europeans had placed the seal of their approval upon his works that the Japanese recognized him as one of their masters. He was wonderful in versatility and industry, designing temples, palaces, landscapes, every day life or fashion, but above all attracted by mankind. He was always striving towards perfection, and in an edition of some views of Tugi was found the following note: "From the age of six years I had a passion for drawing the form of objects. Toward my fifteenth year I had published a number of designs; but I am dissatisfied with all that I did before I was seventy. It was at the age of seventy-three that I fully understood the true form and nature of birds, fish, plants. Consequently at the age of eighty I shall have made much progress; at ninety I shall arrive at the real nature of things; at the age of a hundred and ten, be it a point or line, all will be alive. I demand of those who shall live as long as myself to ask if I have not kept my word. Written at the age of seventy-five by me, hitherto called Hokusai." Upon reading this can one wonder that his works are those of a genius, in which life, power, feeling and beauty are combined. The Japanese engravers were of incomparable skill, which, added to unlimited patience, freedom from mercenary motives, resulted in work by the side of which the efforts of our chromo-lithographists appear coarse. They generally engraved upon the heart of the cherry tree; wood tender and supple, fitted for the finest and most delicate work. The paper and inks were chosen with scrupulous care by the workmen. Minute care was given to the impressions and the result was wood cuts having the charm, freshness and softness of water colors. The different colors join one another with wonderful accuracy, bold and clear or faded and soft. Gold, silver, bronze and even tin were employed to heighten the general effect, and the difficulties overcome show the wonderful skill of the Japanese workmen and the boundless imagination and fancy of the designer.

諸國名所百景

東山松
山王寺
新松



福王寺

REPRÔDUCTION OF A
JAPANESE PRINT FROM
A WOOD CUT BY UTAMARO

當世好物八景

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哥之好

泉市



富世好物八景

好

哥之好

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